



CONSERVE. CONNECT. PROTECT.



2019 Lake Witten Fisheries Management Report

Lake Witten is a 51-acre impoundment owned by Tazewell County that lies within the boundaries of Cavitt's Creek Park. The reservoir was constructed in 1988 and the land surrounding the lake is a mix of grasslands and forest. The reservoir supports a diverse fish community including: largemouth bass, bluegill, redbreast sunfish, black crappie, channel catfish, rock bass, and trout. Lake Witten is part of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries "Catchable Trout Stocking Program" and is stocked with rainbow and brown trout eight times between October 1st and May 31st. A Virginia freshwater fishing license is required to fish the lake, and a trout-fishing license is required from October 1st through June 15th.

Population Sampling

The fish populations in Lake Witten are sampled each year in May using boat-mounted electrofishing gear. Fish collected during these population surveys are measured, weighed, and released back into the lake. The data collected during the annual samples provide biologists with important information about the relative abundance (number of fish collected per hour of sampling) and size structure of the various fish populations. These ongoing monitoring efforts also allow biologists to assess trends in the fish populations over time.

Largemouth Bass - Largemouth bass was the most abundant fish species collected in the 2018 electrofishing sample. The abundance of largemouth bass in 2018 (88 fish/hr) was within the range of abundances observed from 2005 - 2017 (56 – 118 fish/hr) and was comparable to the long-term average for this period (86 fish/hr; Figure 1).

Largemouth bass observed during the 2018 sample ranged in length from 3 to 20 inches with an average length of about 11 inches (Figure 2). Forty-two percent of the adult largemouth bass were 12 inches or larger and 17% exceeded 15 inches. Five percent of adult largemouth bass in the sample measured 20 inches or more in length. This size structure is excellent and is one of the best among small impoundments in this region. The 14-24 inch slot limit regulation is currently protecting 18% of the largemouth bass population.

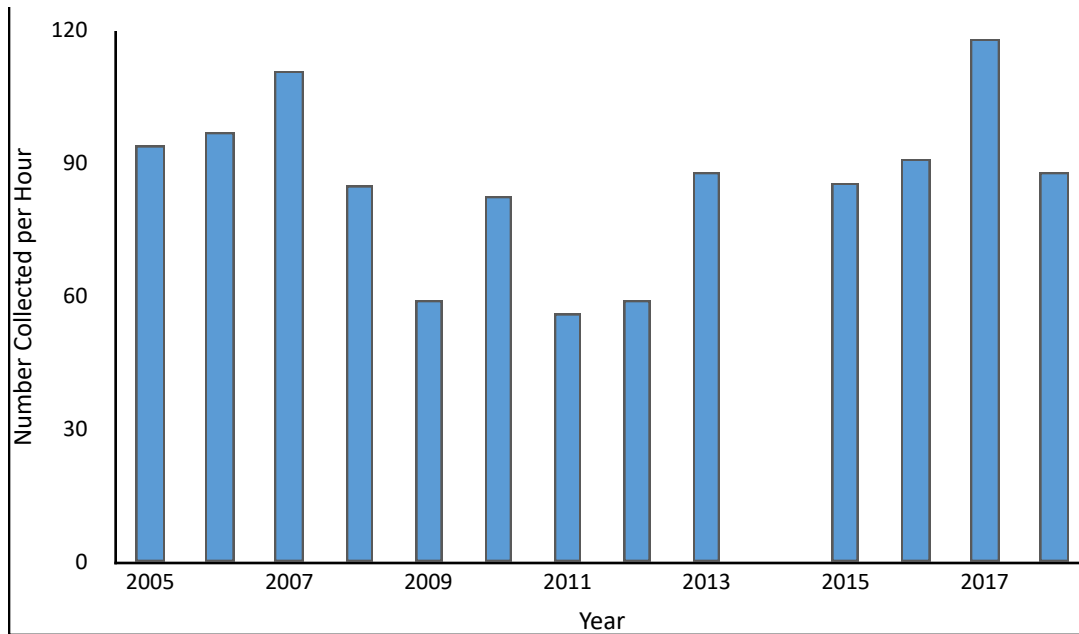


Figure 1. Number of largemouth bass collected per hour of sampling in Lake Witten 2005-2018. The lake was not sampled in 2014.

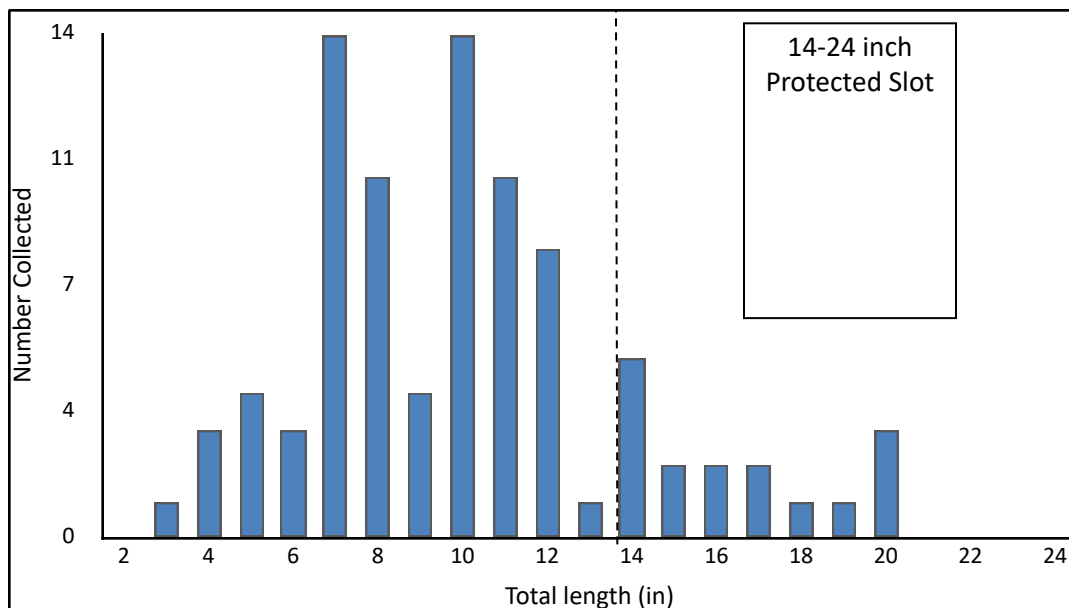


Figure 2. Length frequency distribution of largemouth bass collected during Lake Witten electrofishing samples in spring 2018.

Sunfish – The catch rate for bluegill in 2018 (38 fish/hr) was down considerably from previous years, however, this species still dominated the sunfish population at Lake Witten. Redbreast sunfish and black crappie are also common and abundant in some years. The

size structure is above average for small impoundments in Southwest Virginia and anglers just might catch a trophy. Redbreast sunfish and black crappie are not as abundant as bluegill but there are enough of them for anglers to enjoying catching these species.

Catfish - Channel catfish offer something for those anglers who target catfish. The lake is not known for exceptional catfishing, but some large channel catfish have been collected in the past. Some of these channel cats were over 24 inches long, so the lake definitely has the potential to produce some memorable fish.

Anglers fishing Lake Witten can enjoy exceptional fishing for a variety of species. Whether one is pursuing stocked trout or trophy largemouth bass, this lake is hard to beat. Cavitt's Creek Park offers anglers boat launching facilities and a seasonal campground. More information pertaining to Cavitt's Creek Park and its facilities can be obtained by contacting the park manager (276-988-7250).

For more information on the fishery, contact Jeff Williams by telephone (276) 783-4860 or by e-mail jeff.williams@dgif.virginia.gov